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ABSTRACT

This report explores the impact of alcohol and drug problems on the children and families served by the child welfare system and outlines a comprehensive strategy to better respond to their needs. It contains more than 100 policy and action recommendations to enhance services to children and families affected by alcohol and other drugs (AOD), to respond to substance abuse in the workplace, to build on collaborative efforts across service delivery systems, and to define a research agenda. Following a general introduction (Chapter 1), this report links chemical dependency and child welfare in five ways. Chapter 2 is an overview of the child welfare system and how it is supposed to protect children and strengthen and support families; it is also an exploration of what chemical dependency means for individuals, families, and service providers. Chapter 3 looks at the challenging service needs of today's chemically involved clients, beginning with an overview of families and chemical dependency. Then it addresses three specific population groups: pregnant and parenting women, drug-exposed infants and toddlers, and adolescents at risk of chemical dependency. Chapter 4 examines the current responses of the child welfare system to these populations and details the eight broad responsibilities of child welfare. Chapter 5 presents an overview of the challenges to related human service systems: alcohol and other drug prevention and treatment providers, child and family courts, the health care system, child day care, and early education. Chapter 6 suggests strategies for improving services to children and chemically involved families at the local community level. The final chapter, "A Call to Action," challenges the President, the Congress, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), governors, and state legislatures to act in behalf of children by taking 12 steps toward child-centered public policies of AOD abuse. The Commission also calls for changes in the policy and practice of the child welfare and related human service systems. Appendices are: (1) The North American

Commission on Chemical Dependency and Child Welfare; (2) Federal Programs Currently Addressing Chemical Dependency in Families; and (3) Content Outline for Core AOD Training. Chapters contain a total of 146 endnotes. (JBJ)

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